

Message Text

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R 160634 Z JUN 73 V

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4580

INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 4396

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, MOPS, PFOR, LA

SUBJECT: STATUS OF RLG- LPF NEGOTIATIONS

1. I CALLED ON PHENG PHONGSAVAN JUNE 15 TO INQUIRE WHETHER PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE IN HIS MEETING WITH PHOUMI VONGVICHIT SAME DAY. PHENG SAID THAT JUNE 15 MEETING HAD BEEN " PRODUCTIVE" AND THAT PHOUMI HAD DISPLAYED A MORE BUSINESS- LIKE ATTITUDE IN DISCUSSING OUTSTANDING ISSUES THAN AT PREVIOUS MEETINGS.

2. PHENG SAID THAT HE AND PHOUMI HAD BEEN CONVOKED TO THE PRIME MINISTER' S RESIDENCE AFTERNOON JUNE 14 WHERE PRIME MINISTER HAD TOLD THEM " TO COMPLETE NEGOTIATIONS ON A PROTOCOL DETAILING IMPLEMENTATION OF VIENTIANE AGREEMENT BY JULY 1." PHOUMI HAD AGREED TO " TRY TO MEET THIS DEADLINE." SOUVANNA HAD INSTRUCTED THE TWO NEGOTIATORS FIRST TO TRY TO RESOLVE ALL PROBLEMS BY THEMSELVES BUT IF THEY GET INTO AN IMPASSE ON A SPECIFIC POINT, THEY SHOULD COME TO HIM FOR HELP.

2. AT JUNE 15 MEETING PHENG AND PHOUMI DISCUSSED IN DEPTH ONLY THE COALITION GOVERNMENT. ON SATURDAY, JUNE 16, THEY PLAN TO DISCUSS THE JOINT NATIONAL POLITICAL COUNCIL, WHICH PHENG THOUGHT WOULD BE AN EASY SESSION BECAUSE BOTH SIDES AGREE ON ITS SIZE, COMPOSITION AND DISTRIBUTION OF ITS LEADERSHIP POSITIONS. ON MONDAY, JUNE 18, THEY WILL DISCUSS THE NEUTRALIZATION OF
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VIENTIANE AND LUANG PRABANG, WHICH CONCERNS ESTABLISHMENT OF FRAMEWORK TO PROVIDE SECURITY TO THE LPF MINISTERS IN COALITION GOVERNMENT. ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 20, PHENG AND PHOUMI HOPE TO TACKLE STRICTLY MILITARY ISSUES OF THE SETTLEMENT. PHENG SAID THAT PHOUMI HAD AGREED THAT BOTH SIDES SHOULD PRODUCE A MAP OF LAOS SHOWING WHAT TERRAIN IT HELD ON THE DATE OF THE CEASEFIRE IN LAOS (FEBRUARY JWWLM TOWARD THAT END, FAR GENERAL STAFF HAS ALREADY WORKED UP A DETAILED MAP OF RLG- HELD POSITIONS. PHENG DID NOT MINIMIZE PROBLEM OF RECONCILING THE TWO POSITIONS ON CONTESTED TERRAIN BUT HE WAS PLEASED TO HEAR THAT PHOUMI WAS AT LEAST WILLING TO GET DOWN TO SPECIFICS ON THIS IMPORTANT TOPIC.

3. PHENG CONFIRMED THAT THE RLG PROPOSAL OF INCREASING THE NUMBER OF STAKES DELINEATING THE AREAS WHERE THE TWO OPPOSING FORCES ARE IN DIRECT CONTACT WAS PRIMARILY A BARGAINING PLOY (LPF WANTS 32 STAKES, RLG SUGGESTED 82). HE THOUGHT THAT AT THE END AGREEMENT COULD BE REACHED ON PERHAPS 50 STAKES GIVING BOTH RLG AND LPF SATISFACTION. PHENG SAID THAT HE WOULD ALSO DISCUSS WITH PHOUMI NEXT WEEK THE SITES FOR STATIONING JOINT MILITARY TEAMS. PHOUMI AGREED THAT JOINT MILITARY TEAMS WOULD ONLY BE STATIONED AT " HOT POINTS" AND WOULD NOT BE PRESENT AT EVERY EMPLACEMENT OF STAKES.

4. THE ROLE OF THE ICC WILL ALSO BE DISCUSSED NEXT WEEK. PHOUMI TOLD PHENG JUNE 15 THAT LPF WANTS NO FIXED ICC TEAMS BUT AGREED TO SOME MOBILE ICC TEAMS. RLG ON OTHER HAND WOULD LIKE TO HAVE SOME FIXED TEAMS. PHENG SAID THAT RLG SUGGESTION OF AN ICC FORCE OF 600 IS BARGAINING TACTIC AND THAT RLG WOULD SETTLE FOR SAME NUMBER AS WERE IN LAOS IN 1962/1963. THAT FIGURE WAS 262, ACCORDING TO ICC RECORDS WHICH WE CONSULTED.

5. JUNE 15 MEETING FOCUSED ON COALITION GOVERNMENT. ACCORDING TO PHENG, LPF CONTINUES TO HOLD OUT FOR VICE PRIME MINISTERSHIP FOR PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG. PHENG ARGUED WITH PHOUMI THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO VICE PRIME MINISTER; IF LPF INSISTS, RLG WOULD AGREE TO TWO VICE PRIME MINISTERS, ONE FOR LPF AND THE OTHER FOR THE RIGHT. PHENG THOUGHT THAT THIS PROBLEM WILL HAVE TO BE SETTLED BY SOUVANNA HIMSELF BECAUSE LPF APPEARS TO BE UNWILLING TO COMPROMISE ON THIS SUBJECT.

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6. RE DISTRIBUTION OF MINISTERIES IN THE COALITION GOVERNMENT, PHENG OFFERED LPF FOLLOWING PORTFOLIOS: FINANCE, FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ECONOMY AND PLAN, INFORMATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH. RLG WANTS TO HOLD ON TO DEFENSE, INTERIOR, EDUCATION, PUBLIC WORKS AND PTT. THE REMAINING MINISTRIES WOULD BE HEADED BY " NEUTRAL" PERSONALITIES. PHOUMI AGREED TO THIS DISTRIBUTION EXCEPT FOR INTERIOR WHICH HE ARGUED SHOULD BE HEADED BY LPF. AT THE END OF JUNE 15

MEETING, PHOUMI TOLD PHENG THAT HE FELT " SOME PROGRESS" HAD BEEN
MADE IN RESOLVING PROBLEMS ON COALITION GOVERNMENT.

7. COMMENT: JUNE 15 MEETING BETWEEN PHENG AND PHOUMI APPEARS
TO INDICATE THAT SIGNATURE OF COMMUNIQUE IN PARIS HAS LEAD TO
RESUMPTION OF SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS IN VIENTIANE.;;
DEAN

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